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Secrecy, As Usual

One of the first lessons the beginning reporter learns in the construction of a news story is that he must include the "five W's."

The where, when, who, what and why must be utilized to inform the public.

It is difficult, and sometimes impossible, to do so when the reporter finds himself in the midst of a news story and cannot, because of news management, include one or more of these basic items.

Then he and the newspaper are in a position which both deplore, that of depriving the public of its constitutionally guaranteed right to be fully informed.

There are few excuses for news management, but it is something which reporters and newspapers run into every day.

It is perhaps valid when the federal government hides behind the well-worn tag of "national security" in time of so-called national crisis, but when an agency, private or governmental, deals in civilian matters which are of great concern to the public, then there is no excuse.

Such was the "confidential" report of the National Capital Regional Planning Council concerning the Defense Intelligence Agency's proposed facility at Arlington Hall.

Meeting in executive session, the NCRPC staff cut large holes in the DIA's ill-conceived, ill-considered position on an Arlington County request calling for a study of possible alternate sites for the \$17.9 million building.

The County Board is on record

with the hope that the DIA will forsake Arlington Hall and the property will be returned to Arlington for public use.

But the County Board did not act on its own impetus alone. A private organization titled "Arlington Hall for Arlington Committee" has been more than vocal in its efforts to secure the property for the county.

This committee represents the viewpoint of a large part of the county's interested public and any effort, no matter what the reason, to hide them and the public facts concerning any suggestion, proposal or action that may affect the eventual outcome of this problem is without justification.

Since the March 15 report was made public, it has been discovered that another closed-door session of the NCRPC has been held, and again, the public is without knowledge of what, if any, action was taken.

It is suggested that the NCRPC come out from behind its closed doors and let the public in on what is happening concerning Arlington Hall.

And it might not be a bad idea if a similar position is adopted with all of the many other complex problems considered by the NCRPC, which affects not only Arlington but all of Northern Virginia, suburban Maryland and the District of Columbia.

Let the NCRPC adopt as its credo, "Full Knowledge Means Fuller Participation."